

Watch the Wind Blow by miilksteak

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Summary:

There were many reasons for sporting the unmanaged mop of hair that Richie had taken months to grow out. One of the reasons being it was an act of defiance; every one of his peers, family, or friends felt the need to stick their necks where it didn't belong and let him know that his overgrown curls made him look shaggy and unprofessional. They would always say how he was graduating this year, that he needed to look put together for the adult world he would soon be diving into, post college degree. However, he tried his best to convince himself that the comments of disapproval towards his appearance didn't truly affect how he felt, and he wouldn't let anyone believe that they did. If someone made a rude remark towards his jungle maine of a haircut, he'd laugh it off, proclaim in resistance that he didn't care what others thought of him. That he loved doing things that could get arise out of other people. Only one part of his retaliation would be true; Richie couldn't help but chase the feeling of pissing others off.

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There were many reasons for sporting the unmanaged mop of hair that Richie had taken months to grow out. One of the reasons being it was an act of defiance; every one of his peers, family, or friends felt the need to stick their necks where it didn't belong and let him know that his overgrown curls made him look shaggy and unprofessional. They would always say how he was graduating this year, that he needed to look put together for the adult world he would soon be diving into, post college degree. However, he tried his best to convince himself that the comments of disapproval towards his appearance didn't truly affect how he felt, and he wouldn't let anyone believe that they did. If someone made a rude remark towards his jungle maine of a haircut, he'd laugh it off, proclaim in resistance that he didn't care what others thought of him. That he loved doing things that could get arise out of other people. Only one part of his retaliation would be true; Richie couldn't help but chase the feeling of pissing others off.

The second reason he kept his hair the way he did (at shoulder length with curls that could not be contained even if Richie did try to keep them in order), was because they provided him with a layer of protection from the judgemental scenery that was the world around him. Loose layers of chocolate brown ringlets surrounded his square jaw in a messy fashion. Sometimes the curls draped in front of his face like a curtain did to a window, which prevented him from properly seeing out of his glasses. Richie's need for attention often conflicted with his anxious thoughts, so this part of himself was especially useful as it rendered him the ability to do whatever he pleased without fear that a stranger could get a good look at him and read him perfectly. Understand him in ways that he didn't understand himself. He tried his best to ignore these thoughts and focus in on the setting he was in. A room he had been in a million times before, yet he still wasn't able to shake the nerves that traveled up his spine.

Richie's eyes wandered up to the ceiling of the green room. The room was small and cramped, nervousness and hesitant laughter floating around the space from the other young comedians that were scattered throughout the space. Two of them were sharing a bottle of water that had some condensation on the plastic. Richie glanced at the girl who leaned against the snack table and noted that she had a youthful look to her: most likely a freshman. He brought his head down to look at his feet, thinking about how Jon wouldn't even consider him as a performer until he was half way through his sophomore year.

Jon was the manager who ran the comedy club. He graduated about 7 years back, and decided that with his newly earned business degree that he would turn an unimportant Chinese restaurant into a hip comedic club for current NYU students who were engaged in the comedy scene. Richie met Jon in his freshman year of college, viewing Jon as an undiscovered comedy God that would be the ones to touch the lives of every student who has any ounce of passion towards the specialty. He would go in every Friday night to watch the students who were a few years ahead of him get genuine laughter from a seemingly unreceptive crowd. Richie desired that. An ability to make others laugh from his naturally goofy persona. Sometimes it worked and other times he pushed his luck.

The grip he had on the bottle of Jack Daniels tightened under his distress. Richie uncapped the dark brown liquor bottle and brought it to his lips in a hasty fashion, disappointed that anxiousness was radiating off of him. He didn't feel like himself. He used to never get anxious. He closed his pink lips around the bottle and took a swig that traveled down his throat, burning as it went. Some of the whiskey accumulated on his top lip to which he wiped away swiftly, his hands grazing the two day old stubble that rested on his face. Instantly, he felt some of the anxiety subside, but left his hand to rest silently on his bouncing knee.

Richie's eyes were still focused on the ceiling, but he saw that the doorknob jiggled from his peripheral vision. Jon eventually busted through the door, and headed straight for the snack table where he was greeted by the other comedians. Richie stayed silent and watched him pick away at the grapes that were sitting out before he

made eye contact with Richie and walked over.

“Tozier, you go on in 5,” Jon told him, tossing a few more green grapes into his mouth that popped when his jaws tore into them.

Richie passed Jon a hopeful smirk and wiped away the sweat that was pouring from the top of his hairline. He heard a few chuckles come from the stage along with a sea of claps, signifying the end of the set for whoever was just performing. Richie tried to recall who it was and he was pretty sure it was a new person, someone Richie had never seen before. A young man with blonde hair and handsome features who seemed charismatic and charming. A lot of people in the industry fit this characterization and Richie tried not to feel insecure that he was somehow lacking in both areas of looks and charisma.

He noted that the club was more packed than it usually was. It's not that the club was unpopular on campus, it did have it's regulars and made good monthly earnings, but it was relatively niche. It made Richie's stomach churn when there was louder cheering than usual. He desperately wished that the reason for the increase in numbers was due to his comedic stylings, but he knew that wasn't the case. A more probable clause would be the two for one drink specials on Friday nights that Jon had just introduced to the club. Although Richie did once have many people stop by for a night of comedy in support of him, those people didn't swing by much anymore.

Before getting up from his safe haven, Richie unscrewed the bottle one last time and took a big gulp before he made his descent towards the stage. The student who had just performed accidentally brushed his shoulder as he exited and offered Richie a sincere smile. Richie tried his best to return in, but it probably came out as a look of constipation and apprehension.

Richie took a large breathe in and released before he found the ability to make his legs move towards the stage. It took him a few seconds, but he did find the nerve; he entered the center stage slowly, taking in the crowd that was illuminated by a warm glow of stage lights. Over 80 people looked at him with hopeful eyes and their gleams whipped him into shape. He took the microphone from its stand, tried to get comfortable, and let his eyes fall to the back of the

room where it was dark and not as many people resided.

Richie did notice one young man who was left to his own devices in the back of the dark room and he did not didn't recognize whoever it was. It's not like Richie could name every face in the room, but he was familiar with a decent handful of them. He wouldn't be surprised if at least ten of the people in the crowd were able to say, 'Hey, wasn't that the guy who ran naked across the frat house's front lawn for twenty dollars?'. However, the young student in the back peaked Richie's interest because he had a yellow legal pad and a ballpoint pen in hand. Richie wondered why the fuck anyone would bring those accoutrements to a comedy show.

The student couldn't have been much older or younger than Richie; they were probably in the same year, but he definitely seemed more grown up than Richie. More handsome. Unlike Richie, his hair was neatly groomed and shaped, showing the world that whoever this guy was, he was put together and responsible. Richie didn't think the look of neatness much suited him, but he recognized that on other people it can be charming. Whoever was in the back was clear evidence of that.

"How's everyone doing tonight?" Richie eventually asked, tearing his eyes from the young man in the back. His words were slightly slurred, but he searched for faux confidence in his ability to deliver. He broke the eye contact he was making with the young man in the back and shifted his view towards the people sitting closest to the stage. Some of the crowd mumbled that they were doing well. Another portion of the crowd sat towards the middle of the room talking haphazardly amongst themselves, evidently disinterested in whatever Richie was about to start.

"That's good to hear. You know, sometimes you don't always hear good things at this hour at night. There was this one time," Richie launched into his first bit, stumbling over his words. "Uh. There was this one time, my girlfriend caught me masturbating." The crowd gave a muted laugh. This was all Richie needed to start feeling insecure. He tugged his hair further into his face.

"Yeah, so my girlfriend caught me masturbating the other night and now I'm apart of a program called Masturbater's Anonymous. Some

people would consider that perversion, but I'm not sure. I think I'm the normal one. I mean, what twenty one year old college student isn't flicking the bean?" Richie asks, voice shaken and desperate that there would be some perception, even though he knew that none of what he was saying was funny or appropriate.

The audience looked at him, disinterested. Sympathetic laughs came from all around, but they conveyed discomfort rather than truly finding his bit humorous. Someone drunkenly yelled from the center of the room, "The kids who actually get laid!" That comment received more attention from anything Richie has said on stage so far. The audience erupted into laughter.

Richie played it off with a nervous breathless laugh before he continued onto his second bit. "My roommate is Jewish. Yeah, and he's actually a pretty nice guy too. I mean, I don't recall there being a stereotype of Jews being mean or anything, but don't get me wrong, he's still a walking stereotype, whatever you're picturing right now in your head, that's exactly what he looks like."

The unfunny joke lingered in the air before he transitioned into the next portion of his set. Richie could feel Jon's judgemental eyes burning holes into his soul from the back of the bar, clearly upset and unimpressed with what Richie was doing. Jon shook his head before he disappeared through the back door that leads to the side stage. Richie uncomfortably shifted his weight back and forth and brought a hand to his unmanaged hair that was beginning to curl at the end. He knew this wasn't going well.

"So this is my last year at the university and I've got to say," He unconsciously let out a sigh, completely forgetting where he was going with the joke. "I've got to say that I forgot the joke. Yup. And that's it. That's my cue to stop." Richie trailed off, laughing uneasily under his breath because it was all he could do. Jon was now watching him from the side stage which meant he could pounce on him the second he stepped out of view from the audience.

"Alright, thank you New York, I'm sorry you had to witness that. Good night." There was some cheering and clapping coming from audience members, but it was primarily due to Richie actually leaving the stage and the fact that the only redeeming comedy was

because of Richie's nervous behaviour.

He placed the microphone back into its stand and heard the crowd begin talking at full volume once more. Placing his hands in his worn jean pockets, he walked down the stairs that were to the right of him and was immediately met with an aggravated Jon at his side. A girl quickly replaced Richie's spot on stage and launches into a set about how it feels being a so called crazy ex girlfriend.

"Rich, man, what the fuck?" He asked instantaneously. Richie sat down on the gray couch he was on moments before, ignoring Jon's pestering. He popped his feet up on the couch as well, taking his precious time before deciding how to handle the situation. His eyes focused on the black shoes he was wearing rather than Jon who hovered around him.

"I know. I know it wasn't my best--" He began a sad excuse before being cut off. "Damn right it wasn't your best, it was pure shit." Jon said with brutal honesty, disappointment written all over his face. The alcohol twisted in Richie's system.

He hates disappointing people he cares about. He didn't care if some drunk students didn't get the entertainment they so desired, but it was different if Jon was unhappy with the entertainment value. Jon was like a mentor or a teacher that actually understood him. In all his years of schooling his teachers disregarded Richie for being goofy and didn't understand how being goofy was not only important to Richie, but it was a part of his identity. Jon understood and even valued Richie for this reason. Jon *mattered* and his opinion was important to Richie because he was one of the first time someone older than him who held authority truly recognized the way Richie behaved. Richie escaped Jon's glare, nervously toying at a loose button on his shirt.

"Listen man, are you doing alright? I swear you haven't been yourself lately." Jon observed worriedly from across the room. Richie's hands covered his face and he rubbed his eyes to avoid Jon seeing him upset. He especially didn't want to get into his feelings when there were strangers a mere 5 feet away. "I'm fine, man. It was just a bad night."

"You need to get your shit together if you're fine then. I've seen you

be successful in the past. I know what you can do and *this*, ” He motioned with his hands. Richie didn’t know if he was motioning to the alcohol, his bad performance, or both. It was probably both. “Isn’t it. Get it together, alright?”

Richie nodded. “Understood captain.” Richie brought his hands to his head to mimic a soldier saluting a sargent and it made Jon break into a smile. “Go home Tozier. Write new material. Good material. Come back in two weeks and run it past me.”

Richie took this as a quo for him to leave the building and sober up. In years past it was common for Richie to hang behind until everyone finishes a set and just get to know the other comedians and performers. He hadn’t done that since the middle of junior year, though. He didn’t feel like hanging out, especially tonight. He figured the best thing he could do right now was to go home and sleep it off.

Home was a term he used loosely. Richie mostly considered it a place to stay that provides shelter and some level of stability and adult credibility. During the end of junior year, he and his close friend Stanley Uris decided they would make the grown up decision to not go back to their hometowns for the summer. Rather, they would put a lease down for a shared apartment together. As much as he was glad to be rooming with someone he didn’t despise and felt relatively close to, Richie had to admit that the apartment didn’t feel much like a real home. It was littered with evidence that it was a college apartment. Beer cans scattered about, relatively uncleaned (or at least Richie’s side of the apartment), and school work placed wherever they could find space.

It was mostly Stan’s school work. Not that Richie didn’t do work, but he could admit that he did not put in nearly as much effort into his education as Stanley did. Stanley had just begun his senior thesis on the history of Judaism in the United States. Richie was a good student, he was just easily distracted and that often affected his ability to put forward the best effort in school. He was lucky that school came naturally to him, or else he could be failing. Not that school didn’t come naturally to Stan, but Stan appreciated school in ways Richie never did. He was always determined and cared about the outcome of not only his future, but his friends’ too.

Richie fumbled for the keys when he arrived at the door of his shared apartment. It was merely a few blocks from campus and the comedy club. Once he could stop the jittering of his cold hands, he placed the aging key into the lock and turned it. The door creaked open and Richie stumbled into the entryway, hitting the light switch to brighten up the entryway of their apartment.

He removed his boots from his feet and tossed his jacket on the kitchen counter, subsequently dragging his socks through the carpet before reaching the living room and throwing his tired body onto the couch. His arms wrapped around the pillow and shook his head so that his glasses would fall off his face. He was too tired to even use both hands to take off his glasses, let alone make it to his own room. A light turned on from down the hall, which was most likely Stan. If it wasn't Stan, he had more issues to worry about than a failed comedy show.

"Rich? You home?" Stan's voice carried to the living room. Richie shut his eyes as tight as he could. "Yeah." He tried his best to indicate he was ready to sleep and didn't want to be talking.

"How was the show?" Stan asked. It was typical to for Stan to ask if something went well. Stan had seen many of Richie's sets but once junior year started it became harder and harder to make it out. Not only did he find Richie's sets harder to digest following junior year, but his work load significantly increased and his primary focus had to be school. Richie tried to not let Stan's absences bother him, though.

"Amazing. Lot's of laughs. In fact, Saturday Night Live representatives were there and you're looking at the new face of Weekend Update." Richie mumbled happily. Stan rolled his eyes silently to himself from the comfort of his own room, peacefully allowing Richie to drift off into a state of unconsciousness.

There was a small on campus coffee shop that was typically uninhibited that resided a short walking distance from where Stan and Richie lived. It was a hole in the wall; an unknown place that the two friends loved and cherished dearly. It was their Monday morning meeting spot before classes and this Monday was no exception. If there were attempts to ever shut this place down, the two of them would have to riot. Or well, Stanley would riot and Richie would roll out of bed ten minutes after the riot had ended, but his heart was in the right place.

The coffee, as well as food, was nothing to get overly excited about, but it was cheap and provided them with a heater that their apartment no longer had. The walls were a musty yellow color and the decorations looked like they could be easily found at any nursing home in the United States. These factors didn't bother the boys, though. In fact, they thought it added to the charm.

Stan sat at a creaky wooden chair, the same way he always did on Monday mornings, with his legs crossed while his eyes were hidden behind the school newspaper. His coffee was half full and his danish was barely eaten when Richie waltzed in, the September breezes following close behind him when he opened the door. He located Stan and grabbed another chair from a neighboring table in order to sit across from Stan. His eyes located Stan's uneaten danish and he instantly reached for it.

"That's mine you know. If you want one pay for it yourself," Stan sounded unimpressed, but his eyes were still following the newly printed paper, too busy reading to actually care. Richie ignored Stan's wishes and took a large bite.

"Don't be a stingy Jew, Stan. Living up to stereotypes is never fun. Leave some room for the imagination, you know?" Richie wiped his hands the jeans he was wearing and then placed them into the pockets of his jacket.

"Very funny, asshole," Stan responded, rolling his eyes before flipping to the next column of the paper. It was a normal occurrence

for Stan to read the school news and actually be informed about the major happenings or issues going on in town. Richie didn't quite understand the appeal, but respected why Stan did it. Stan was an informational person. Although he was still a young man and surely hadn't had more life experience than Richie, there was something older about Stan. More eclectic and knowing. Richie was sure he'd make a good father one day, but you can't exactly tell that to a person while they're still in college. It'll freak them out. Stan had a level head, though and probably did have dreams of one day marrying a nice girl and settling down with two kids.

Stan's eyes continued to graze the paper and as he did this, they grew wider with surprise and shock. He couldn't help but let laughter escape under his breath. He looked up at Richie who had picked up the danish once more. Stan didn't even care and started laughing harder.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Richie asked, face filled with the mediocre tasting pastry. He took a sip of coffee in order to wash it down. "If I didn't know I'd think you had the hots for me. Very flattering, but I think I'd like you more with boobs."

"Wow, Trashmouth. Looks like someone got a very solid review in the paper. One might even say the Trashmouth got trashed," Stan held his tongue in attempts to not laugh at Richie, but that was a tall order. Richie's gut immersed with panic and rapidly grabbed the paper from Stan's hands. He adjusted his glasses to get a better read on the review. It is titled ***When Comedy Becomes a Tragedy***. Richie stared in disbelief, jaw dropping as his eyes scanned the article.

"If you ever find yourself in a dire need for comedic relief on a Friday night and believe that *The Grazer* is the solution to your troubles, I will save you the hassle and insist you pay a visit to our local Best Buy on campus and scan the isles for the comedy section. You are more likely to find comedy there than you are in this supposed 'comedy club'. I was once a proud supporter of students finding a comedic voice within this local hotspot, but I am sad to inform you all that this perspective has changed entirely after witnessing last week's show. " Richie reads, his voice plagued with layers of true humility.

“Dude, you don’t have to read it aloud. I already looked at it.”

Richie ignored Stan’s request and continued anyway.

“The night opened with a few mediocre laughs from this year’s freshman. Nothing particularly outrageous or striking, all acts relatively bland. If that had been the case all night through, this review would not be as interesting as it’s about to get. The main focal selling point of this night was the set of Richie Tozier, a senior from the graduating class of 1997. Although hyped up by the acts prior to his, Tozier fell incredibly short for many reasons.”

“One main reason being the obvious anxiety that radiated from his face despite obvious attempts to cover it up through a drunken state. Not only were his deliver’s unfunny, they were tasteless too. When will this generation learn that Jewish jokes will not be funny, especially if they are not creative or funny? Everything Tozier exhibited was anything but well crafted. It is also important to note that not everyone has a strong desire to know what you do with your penis. Yet, this senior’s most impressive bit was about masturbation, making some of the female audience members uncomfortable and male audience members disturbed. His set finished with forgetting his own joke. This night was truly sad and a disappointment for this year’s senior class.”

Richie tossed the paper on the table and crossed his arms over his chest. He was speechless. In all his years of performing, he never expected something this preposterous. Stan grabbed the paper and continued to read, flipping to the page that predicts the outcome of this year’s football season. Richie let out a steamed sigh, trying to signify to Stan that he was angry.

“What the fuck?” Richie eventually asked in disbelief after Stan ignored him. He knew his set wasn’t great, but to write a review and completely disregard his ability to actually go on stage in front of a crowd full of people was ridiculous to him. Jon will be angry once he hears about this too. It’ll bring down revenue.

“I’m honestly surprised you made it this long without getting a bad review,” Stan chuckled under his breath causing Richie to shoot him a glare which only made him laugh harder. “It’s not funny, dude!”

Richie told him, his first throwing up into the air.

“It’s a little funny,” Stan folded the paper neatly and then tossed it on the table. He took a sip of coffee before continuing. “Look, it was one bad review and from what I heard when you came home on Friday, it’s not like it wasn’t justified. Just learn from this and take more factors into consideration for next time.”

Stan spoke as if it was that easy. If it was as easy as Stan made it out to be, Richie would never have a bad set again. However, deep down he knew that Stan’s general message was correct and he hated that. He didn’t like admitting his faults or when he made an error. He attempted to deflect from the situation

“Yeah, I know that. But, I mean, who is this kid anyway? Writing a review about me as if he could do any better,” Richie took the paper back to see who wrote it. The name Eddie Kaspbrak was written in fine print under the main title of the piece. The name didn’t sound familiar and any fears Richie had of insulting him went away with the new discovery.

“I’d love to see whoever wrote this try and get up on stage and perform. Some guy named Eddie. I’m sure it would be so great. You know what? I should go down to the writing room and give this kid a piece of my mind,” Richie slouched back in the chair and awaited Stan’s response.

“No, you shouldn’t do that. He isn’t a comedian so it wouldn’t be expected for him to excel at that. He’s a columnist for the school paper, not a performer. Everyone has different specialties that we have to respect. Stop projecting your anger.” Stan was right again and it aggravated Richie.

“Stan, if I didn’t know you I’d think you were a priest because you always have to take the moral high ground. The only issue is you’re Jewish. And you haven’t molested anyone to my knowledge. Anyways, why do I have to do the right thing? Can’t I just vent about this?” asked Richie.

“No. You’ll never learn with a one dimensional view on what happens in your life. Plus, I’m sure Eddie is a nice person who just

needed something for an assignment. You're not being fair to his point of view." Stan explained, ignoring the comments about priests and molestation. Richie rolled his eyes at Stanley's retaliation.

"Eddie is *not* actually nice. Not from what I've read," shrugged Richie, pointing at the paper in front of them. Stan didn't push it because he knew that Richie accepting things was a process.

Stan didn't like when Richie was in a bad mood. There was something so distressing about Richie not being in his natural state of silly and happy go-lucky. But, it had been awhile since he had been in a prolonged state of genuine happiness. Probably since junior year. Stan wasn't able to decipher why, either, and Stan prided himself on being good at figuring out the enigma that is Richie Tozier.

"I want to go yell at this guy and give him a piece of my mind," Richie repeated, his body slumped over the table.

"You shouldn't. The anger will subside."

"I'm going to go do it," Richie ignored Stanley and wrapped his jacket tight around his body to protect himself from the cold as he quickly stepped outside.

* * *

This was Richie's fourth and hopefully final year at New York University. In all his years at the school, he had tried his best to learn the ins and outs. His way around so he could be as efficient as possible when trying to get to class as quickly as possible. In all those years though, he had never step foot in the writing room for the school paper. He didn't give a shit about the school paper, he didn't write for the school paper, and he couldn't recall anyone he knew that worked for the paper, so his lack of presence in the room wasn't

unusual.

It didn't take him long to find the room, only took a trip to the library on campus. And just like that, he had all the information he needed to give this kid a piece of his mind. After departing the library, he made his way towards the building in which the writing room lived.

Stan was right, Richie's anger was subsiding, but he figured he was too far deep into the journey to just stop and give up. He was determined to give anyone who would listen to a piece of his mind. He had an hour before he had to be at his next class, anyway. Everytime the article flashes before his eyes, his blood starts to boil even more. He had seen a few students with the paper in hand, and when they passed by him he got more and more embarrassed. That was why he had to go give Eddie Kaspbrak a piece of his mind, no matter if the adrenaline was starting to ease up.

Although though Richie had been cigarette free for about four months, the stairs that led to the writing room left him tired and out of breath. Even after quitting, he was still left gasping for air as he made his way to the second floor of the journalism building. He wondered if quitting was worth the withdrawals and cravings if he was still going to have difficulty doing simple tasks that any in shape person could do without hesitation.

He did eventually reach the room, though. The room was small and looked cramped, a few students sitting in desks within the place, a few getting up to grab paper from the printer. Richie took in the space from behind the door, only peering in through a window that had bold letters painted on the glass that read, 'WRITING ROOM'.

All of a sudden he got real nervous. Hands shaking and sweating kind of nervous. Why did he think he had the confidence to do this? He was so stupid and he didn't even understand it sometimes. He could be so loud and boisterous sometimes but he knew that it was a sham. He didn't have a spine half the time.

Some kid was coming towards the door and opened it to leave. She told Richie, "Excuse me." And walked down the stairs, promptly ignoring him. The door was left open and he could see the entire

room for what it was. It was small, that was for sure. There were approximately seven small desks and writing stations along with two larger desks at the back and a couple of filing systems. He knew he could be larger than the room if he tried, but all he could do was walk in meekly, feeling uncomfortable and out of place like a fish out of water or a square peg in a round hole.

He looked around for a second, trying to spot where Eddie could be, even though he had no idea what he looked like. Richie walked to the back of the room and to one of the larger desks. There was a young man who looked important that was sitting behind it.

“Hey, uh, do you know where I can find, Eddie Kaspbrak?” Richie read the name off the article he was holding, unable to recall from memory what Eddie’s last name was. The young man behind the desk had a name placard that read ‘Ben Hanscom’.

“He’s in a class at the moment. Do you want me to leave your name at his desk so he knows you’re looking for him?”

Richie sighed and let his eyes hit the ceiling, resulting in his Adam’s apple bobbing. He had worked up the courage to actually speak his mind and the damned guy wasn’t even here.

“No, that’s alright. Thanks, though,” Richie shoved his hands into his pockets and turned around, unable to catch what Ben had said. He didn’t care. He needed to get to his own class anyway.

Richie felt like this loss was the universe’s way of telling him that he needs to listen to Stan more often. Richie took another deep breath and tried to remind himself of what Stan would say: probably something along the lines of needing to take care of yourself and pursuing things that are beneficial to your happiness. Telling off some columnist wouldn’t solve his problems, even if he thought it sure would be fun. He walked out of the room, down the stairs, and was soon thrown into the chilling weather of New York City.